

Message

From: Mutter, Andrew [mutter.andrew@epa.gov]
Sent: 11/27/2020 9:57:31 PM
To: Benevento, Douglas [benevento.douglas@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Daily News Clips: Afternoon Edition 11-27-20

From: Enos, Kendra
Sent: Friday, November 27, 2020 2:57:27 PM (UTC-07:00) Mountain Time (US & Canada)
To: AO OPA OMR CLIPS
Subject: Daily News Clips: Afternoon Edition 11-27-20

Biofuels

New lagoons aim to bring around \$1 million per year to Fremont

Water

Clearing up Delray Beach's water issues

BH Clean Water Alliance rejects EPA's approval of Powertech mining permits

Biofuels

New lagoons aim to bring around \$1 million per year to Fremont

https://journalstar.com/news/state-and-regional/nebraska/new-lagoons-aim-to-bring-around-1-million-per-year-to-fremont/article_693a1055-b126-599c-81f2-7f482ab82181.html

COLLIN SPILINEK | Fremont Tribune

A series of new lagoons using waste from Fremont processing plants aims to make the city around \$1 million each year with renewable methane.

The Fremont Wastewater Treatment Plant finished construction in late September on three new lagoons, which take in waste from Lincoln Premium Poultry and will soon include WholeStone Farms.

Keith Kontor, superintendent for the plant, said the project was spearheaded by new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requirements on ammonia limits.

"Knowing that nutrients are going to be coming in in the future, we were looking at expanding our mechanical plant that we have here at the wastewater plant," he said.

Man accused of scamming Nebraska tire stores of thousands of dollars in truck tires

Although construction started in May 2018, Kontor said the project was paused after plans for Costco and LPP to bring a processing plant to Fremont became firm.

Kontor said the plant recognized that it needed pretreatment for the industrial areas in town, including WholeStone, and decided to upsize it to fit the facility.

"So we stepped back and looked at it and kind of thought that maybe these anaerobic lagoons for pretreating the industrial waste coming out of our industrial sites out on the south side of town would be the best way to tackle the heavy loadings," he said.

Lagoons

The Fremont Wastewater Treatment Plant recently finished construction on three new lagoons to convert waste from nearby processing plants to methane gas to sell.

The project is expected to be finished complete in 2023 after WholeStone announced it would add a second shift, because Kontor said the plant's current treatment capacities wouldn't be able to handle the additional loadings.

"So we're going to have to add another additional anaerobic lagoon, which will make a total of four then, add an additional half-sized aeration basin, which is about probably 3.2 million gallons, and then put in another final clarifier and upgrade our ultraviolet disinfection system," he said.

The current lagoons are 6.4 million gallons each, giving the plant close to 19 million gallons total. The lagoons have a membrane liner to prevent leakage.

Industrial wastewater began flowing into one of the lagoons from LPP in late September. The other two lagoons will be placed into service in 2021 after WholeStone finishes its dissolved air flotation system.

One of the Fremont Wastewater Treatment Plant's new lagoons is currently taking in waste from the Lincoln Premium Poultry processing plant.

As well as meeting the EPA requirements and providing pretreatment, Kontor said, the lagoons will be able to capture methane gas and convert it to a renewable natural gas.

"We're going to scrub it from methane, which is a pretty dirty gas, and we're going to scrub it to a natural gas quality, which is a lot cleaner gas," he said. "Then, we will inject it into the pipeline, the city's gas pipeline. We will be utilizing a majority of it, and the rest of it will be injected into the gas line."

According to City Administrator Brian Newton, the methane scrubbing system is still under construction by contractor Bluesource because of delays in overseas shipping with the COVID-19 pandemic.

A lagoon for the Fremont Wastewater Treatment Plant is prepped before a membrane liner is installed.

Once the scrubbed gas is identified and certified, Kontor said, the city will receive renewable energy credits from the EPA, which can be sold on the market for additional income.

Currently, the plant is looking at an annual revenue of \$700,000 to \$1 million by putting the gas back into the pipeline, Kontor said.

"So it's by far very valuable and by far a good way of helping us pay for those improvements that we made to the whole project," Newton said. "It eventually pays for itself."

Workers install a membrane liner to a lagoon at the Fremont Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Kontor said the biggest benefit he sees with the project is just knowing that the city has large industries that not only are looking at expanding, but have the capability to do so.

"Along with having industries within the city of Fremont," he said, "it cuts down the cost on residential customers when we do have to do upgrades, whether they're, most of the time, for new EPA treatment requirements that come down the line."

Water

BH Clean Water Alliance rejects EPA's approval of Powertech mining permits

By Alex Portal, Black Hills Pioneer 27 min ago

RAPID CITY — The Black Hills Clean Water Alliance issued a statement Wednesday, opposing the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) issuance of Underground Injection Control and Safe Drinking Water Act aquifer exemption permits to Powertech (USA) Inc., Tuesday night.

"We oppose this late-night federal government action for two major reasons," said Dr. Liliias Jarding, with the alliance. "With these permits the Environmental Protection Agency has said it's okay to allow the toxic and radioactive contamination of groundwater aquifers — aquifers that are needed in our semi-arid region."

Jarding said the second reason for the opposition is that the EPA's review of the project is not "serious or complete."

"Despite the time they've had to do a good job, the documents issued with the permits and the permit process appear rushed," she said.

Powertech officials said the Dewey-Burdock in situ uranium mining project would extract an estimated one million pounds of uranium a year for eight years from an almost 11,000-acre piece of land that straddles Fall River and Custer counties.

Issuance of the permits was a major hurdle the company has had to overcome in its contentious, 12-year battle to gain permitting. Gaining the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission approval was the first major permitting obstacle and the company gained that OK in 2014.

Jarding listed fractured rock in the Dewey-Burdock area, where the company plans to mine, as an oversight to the EPA's review process, as well as not testing the groundwater aquifer the company plans to pump its wastewater during mining. Jarding also accused the EPA of issuing the permits illegally without first consulting with local tribal governments.

"The EPA is required by law to consult with tribal governments on a range of potential issues. The EPA cut off this process before consultation occurred," she alleged. "Without thorough government-to-government tribal consultation, these permits are illegal."

During a press conference via Zoom, Reno Red Cloud Sr., administrator of the Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department said, "We are aware of the EPA failure to comply with the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) — NHPA (National Historic Preservation Act) regulations for consultation. We will respond soon."

In a prepared statement by the EPA, the permits were granted following a lengthy process.

"These permits reflect many years of evaluation and public comment on Powertech's applications to recover uranium from ore-bearing formations at the Dewey-Burdock project location," said EPA Regional Administrator Gregory Sopkin. "EPA's final actions are based on a thorough consideration of scientific, technical and regulatory aspects of the permits, and a review of all comments received, including those received during tribal consultation. This process has contributed to the development of requirements that will protect the region's groundwater while enabling the safe recovery of valuable uranium resources."

Jarding said the Clean Water Alliance would continue to monitor the permitting process and will circulate a petition to encourage the EPA to withdraw the permits it issued on Tuesday.

“The most important way to stop a project like this is through citizen involvement, and we encourage people to stay involved and stay aware of what is going on around this project,” she said.

Water

Clearing up Delray Beach's water issues

<https://www.sun-sentinel.com/opinion/commentary/fl-op-com-delray-beach-clean-water-20201128-g4n7tkzwtfgstnddqt7a2smvdm-story.html>

In our embattled “Village by the Sea,” everything is political now — whether it’s sea grape trimming, the very public dismissal of our city manager or even our water quality. At this point, it’s hard to tell if this divisiveness is causing or resulting from repeated shake-ups in City Hall. Whether due to the leadership style of Mayor Shelly Petrolia or not, the chronic administrative turnover in Delray Beach has led to instability, which in turn has led to a neglect of appropriate oversight. Finger pointing aside, Delray’s relatively new but experienced utilities director, Hassan Hadjimiry, inherited myriad water issues.

To the city’s credit, the Utilities Department has truly stepped up to address reclaimed water cross-connections, backflow prevention, sediment in the distribution system and storage tank cleaning. Hadjimiry’s comprehensive approach culminated in a series of recommendations presented by staff during a Nov. 10 city workshop. Despite the clear commitment shown by the department, one issue seemed left out — the level of polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) found in Delray’s drinking water.

PFAS are referred to as “forever chemicals” because they accumulate in the food chain — and in our bodies. The concerns over PFAS in Delray’s water surfaced after reports were published by environmental advocacy group Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) and a story by CBS12 News, which ran on Nov. 18.

Rob Long is chair of the Palm Beach Soil and Water Conservation District.

PFAS is an emerging concern that is often misrepresented because the Environmental Protection Agency hasn’t taken a firm stance, except to issue an unenforceable Health Advisory Level (HAL) of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) in 2016. Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection has not yet established regulations, even though this family of chemicals has been causally linked to a multitude of ailments, including cancer. Other states, including California, New Jersey, Minnesota, New Hampshire and Vermont, have imposed their own regulations that require PFAS levels to be under 20 ppt.

So where does Delray stand? To be clear, Delray has not committed any crimes. The city is within legal PFAS limits because there are no established limits in Florida. And depending on how you interpret the city’s drinking water lab results, Delray is at 49 ppt, well below the 70 ppt HAL established by the EPA. However, the devil is in the details.

The city is celebrating the self-tested 49 ppt as a “safe” PFAS level. However, this would not be considered safe in at least seven other states. Further, PEER has a different interpretation of Delray’s finished water results. Their findings consider a wider range of PFAS constituents, some not yet recognized by the EPA, to calculate their result of 113.25 ppt — well above the EPA’s Health Advisory Level.

The PFAS issue is being reviewed further by the Florida Department of Health, which, as of Nov. 23, requested additional source water samples from all of Delray’s utility wells. Perhaps it’s the media’s focus on this issue, or maybe it’s just the hyperbolic political bubble in which Delray Beach currently exists — but certain members of Delray’s commission have dug in.

Some of their attitudes were reminiscent of familiar calls of “fake news” in national politics, with comments like “the whole thing is ridiculous” and sarcastic assertions that clean drinking water “would be like distilled water” in an attempt to sweep the issue under the rug. The Florida Department of Health didn’t find this concern ridiculous. In fact, the FDOH called it an “unreasonable risk to health” and ordered the city to conduct quarterly sampling for the next year.

This is not an attempt to scare residents or lay blame. This is an opportunity for our city to have an honest discussion and make the necessary long-term investments that will create a more sustainable future. Leading by example is not new to our city, it's part of our entrepreneurial attitude — coastal flooding resiliency and tree canopy restoration are just two examples. Today, Delray Beach has a chance to join with the growing number of communities around the country, including Miami-Dade County, that are addressing the concern of PFAS.

Just last month, the Florida League of Cities addressed the PFAS issue in a presentation from their Natural Resources and Public Works Legislative Policy Committee. Earlier this week, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed legislation to ban PFAS in certain cities in response to “concerns raised by residents.” According to the Environmental Working Group and the Social Science Environmental Health Research Institute, at least 19 million people in 43 states are being affected by PFAS in their drinking water. Until Florida abandons its anti-regulation approach or the EPA caves from congressional pressure, Delray should add this to the city's comprehensive approach to addressing water quality. If we could all put politics aside, Delray Beach could be a leader when it comes to PFAS regulations and, in doing so, prioritize the health of its residents in the process.

Rob Long is chair of the Palm Beach Soil and Water Conservation District and a Delray Beach resident.